UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FIFTY-FIRST SESSION

*Official Records*

FIFTH COMMITTEE
43rd meeting
held on
Friday, 13 December 1996
at 10 a.m.
New York

# SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 43rd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. SENGWE (Zimbabwe)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 112: REVIEW OF THE EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL FUNCTIONING OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 116: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1996-1997 (continued)

First performance report (continued)

Request for a subvention to the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (continued)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of the publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-794, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

Distr. GENERAL
A/C.5/51/SR.43
28 February 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

96-82494 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 112: REVIEW OF THE EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL FUNCTIONING OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued)

Proposed programme budget outline for the biennium 1998-1999 (continued) (A/51/289 and A/51/720)

AGENDA ITEM 116: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1996-1997 (continued)

First performance report (continued) (A/51/7/Add.6 and A/C.5/51/38)

1. Mr. OGAWA (Japan) said that he strongly supported the Secretariat's continued efforts to realize budgetary savings by improving productivity and efficiency, and was pleased to note that the proposed level of the 1998-1999 budget was slightly lower than that of the 1996-1997 budget. However, achieving zero or negative budget growth was not an end in itself; the proposed budget outline should be examined with a view to strengthening the Organization's effectiveness as well. Therefore, the overall budget level for the next biennium could not be established until the relevant intergovernmental bodies had determined whether the proposed level would provide adequate resources for the full implementation of all mandated programmes and activities. The same issue arose in connection with the savings that would be necessary to maintain the ceiling of $2,608 million in the current programme budget.

2. The Secretariat should state candidly whether it could implement all mandated programmes within the proposed budget outline so that Member States could set priorities and decide whether some programmes should be eliminated or delayed. He supported the recommendation, contained in paragraph 17 of the report of the Advisory Committee on Administration and Budgetary Questions (A/51/720), that the General Assembly should take note of the proposed budget outline pending its final decision.

3. Although the proposal to include the costs of special missions in the budget deviated from the procedure prescribed in General Assembly resolution 41/213, it represented a pragmatic solution which his delegation supported; the necessary legislative adjustments should be made so that it could be put into practice. He supported the Advisory Committee's recommendation that the Secretary-General should submit policy proposals on the matter. He also agreed with the proposal to change the accounting method for expenditures relating to the Joint Inspection Unit, the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) and the Vienna International Centre. With respect to the contingency fund, the specific level should be adjusted in the light of recent experience; one possible solution would be to set it at an intermediate level between the level proposed by the Secretary-General and that proposed by the Advisory Committee. Lastly, payment by Member States of their assessed contributions was indispensable for the effective implementation of programmes.

4. Mr. GOKHALE (India) said that the increased recognition of the need for reform to make the United Nations more responsive to the needs of Member States was accompanied by an unwillingness on the part of those States to invest in measures which would enable the Organization to enhance the cost-effectiveness

and efficiency of the Secretariat. Instead of merely demanding further cost reductions, Member States should balance cost-cutting with resource provision to consolidate the reforms already implemented.

5. The Secretary-General's proposed budget outline for 1998-1999 involved a reduction of nearly $200 million in real terms in comparison with the current budget. Since a reduction of over $200 million had already been achieved in the current budget, careful consideration must be given to whether the proposed budget outline would allow for the full implementation of all mandated programmes and activities. Moreover, it must be borne in mind that the Secretary-General's budget projection was only a preliminary estimate of the requirements for 1998-1999, since the impact of future decisions of United Nations organs and of inflation and currency fluctuations could not be accurately predicted.

6. The impact of the reform process on the budget estimate for 1998-1999 did not have to be unidirectional. For example, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the Centre for Human Rights and the Office of Legal Affairs had made restructuring efforts which had resulted in considerable savings, yet further budget reductions would be detrimental to their activities. To preserve the benefits of reform, adequate funds should be provided for such activities in the next budget. Since funding for international and regional cooperation for development was to be reduced further, he asked the Secretariat for assurances that the reduced allocations would be sufficient to cover all mandated programmes and activities arising from the recent world conferences in Copenhagen, Beijing, Cairo and Istanbul.

7. The Secretary-General's proposal to reduce the level of the contingency fund was based on the experience of the first quarter of the current biennium. However, it must be borne in mind that activities which deserved financing were likely to arise at different times during the biennium, and the contingency fund must be able to cover them. The only area in which the Secretary-General was not proposing reductions was that of special missions. However, it was premature and inconsistent with current budgeting procedures to make provision for expenditures which had no legislative mandate yet. Such activities should be financed according to the procedures laid down in General Assembly resolution 41/213. Lastly, his delegation supported the general approach taken by the Secretary-General, which reflected a concern for efficiency and cost-effectiveness, on the understanding that it would not adversely affect any mandated programmes and activities.

8. Ms. GOICOCHEA (Cuba) said that she fully supported the statement on the items under consideration which the representative of Costa Rica had made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Although the current session was not taking place in a budget year, budget-related issues had arisen because of the political position of one Member State which had tried to contravene the letter and spirit of General Assembly resolution 50/214, and even the procedures laid down in resolution 41/213. The latter resolution should be completely revised if any of the decisions adopted at the current session deviated from the procedure it had established.

9. Unfortunately, the reports of the Secretary-General did not provide detailed information, and the related recommendations of the Advisory Committee

were equally unspecific; her delegation therefore could not endorse the latter. With respect to the performance report (A/C.5/51/38), she questioned the validity of the proposed level of resources for the biennium, since it did not reflect revised estimates or the programme budget implications of the resolutions being adopted at the current session of the General Assembly. She asked why the report and the recosted budget did not include the costs of conference services arising from a number of those resolutions and requested the Secretariat to provide updated information on those figures. Although she did not oppose the proposal to absorb the cost of new mandates through the surplus generated by changes in exchange rates, she wondered why the Secretary-General had not proposed to use part of that surplus to reinstate some of the activities which had been cancelled or delayed. Moreover, that surplus had obviated the need to increase the vacancy rate beyond its current level of 6.4 per cent. She asked what vacancy rate would be required for the biennium after the application of the $29 million remaining from the surplus once the expenses of unfunded mandates had been met.

10. Her delegation would like a written explanation of why the expenses of the fact-finding mission referred to in paragraph 16 (a) (i) c of document A/C.5/51/38 had been classified as unforeseen and extraordinary, when the financing of such activities was provided for in section 21 of the current programme budget. She recalled that, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 41/213, appropriations resulting from the use of the contingency fund should be added to the total amount of the budget for the biennium.

11. The proposed programme outline for the biennium 1998-1999 (A/51/289) seemed to reflect political decisions more than the need to implement all mandated programmes and activities, and thus deviated from resolution 41/213. It should be recalled that the concept of zero growth had never been endorsed in any General Assembly resolution. It was inconceivable that the Secretary-General should have taken the current level of appropriations as a starting point, instead of the level of expenditure approved in General Assembly resolution 50/214 ($2,712,265,200). On the basis of the latter figure, the proposed budget reductions amounted to 10 per cent in real terms, and clearly could not be implemented without substantively affecting mandated programmes and activities. Moreover, the proposed budget outline ignored paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 50/230, which specified that the programme budget for 1996-1997 had been adopted under unique circumstances and did not constitute a precedent. The Secretariat should provide an explanation in that regard.

12. She fully agreed with the Group of 77 that the expected budget reduction of $204.7 million in 1996-1997 should be added to the overall amount of the budget outline for 1997-1998 and that the number of posts to be abolished should be reduced accordingly. The Secretariat should not have used the budget outline to propose changes that required political decisions. She was particularly concerned about the proposal to include $70 million to activities related to the maintenance of international peace and security, which was tantamount to the arbitrary and selective establishment of mini-contingency funds and seemed to spring more from intergovernmental negotiations than from technically sound reasons. That amount should therefore be subtracted from the total.

13. Expenditure for the procurement of equipment for the Department of Administration and Management ought to have been included in the budget, and the

level of the contingency fund should be maintained at 0.75 per cent. Lastly, she reiterated her request that the Secretary-General should provide delegations with the information requested in paragraph 18 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/51/720) in order to facilitate the decision-making process.

14. Mr. KELLY (Ireland), speaking on behalf of the European Union and the associate countries of Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia, reminded the Committee that the budget outline was intended to represent a preliminary estimate, and should therefore be regarded as simply a planning figure. Nevertheless, if current assumptions persisted, that figure should be respected in the subsequent formulation of the programme budget to ensure budgetary responsibility and discipline. Current procedures, such as those set out in General Assembly resolution 41/213, provided for the treatment of certain additional expenditures; therefore, the budget figure, once adopted, should not be considered as a rigid ceiling. From that standpoint, then, the proposed savings of $200 million in the current budget, to be generated by increased productivity, was a planning figure. Any further productivity gains or efficiency savings in the budget outline should be fully justified in the proposed programme budget, as called for in paragraph 10 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/51/720).

15. The maintenance of any vacancy rate should be efficiency-driven rather than economy-driven, and due consideration should be given to the results of the Performance Appraisal System in achieving such vacancies. There was a need to safeguard priority areas of the programme budget, and a higher proportion of regular budget resources should be allocated to peacekeeping, human rights and humanitarian affairs. The proposed reduction in common support services, including conference services, was considerably greater than the overall average proposed reduction, and he sought assurances that the proposed economies would neither erode the quality of language services nor result in reductions in conference services which were higher than the average for the budget as a whole.

16. He welcomed the proposed provision for special missions, which would ensure that their eventual operation was not endangered by a lack of assured funding. The European Union was flexible as to how that provision might be appropriated and assessed in the framework of the programme budget and endorsed the relevant recommendation of the Advisory Committee (A/51/720, para. 5). The proposal to reflect provisions on a net rather than gross basis for jointly financed activities and services would more accurately reflect the true level of expenditure. However, he wondered whether that change should be taken into account when comparing the overall level of requirements for 1998-1999 with the level for the current biennium.

17. He supported the list of priorities for the coming biennium which appeared in paragraph 10 of the proposed outline. However, in view of the importance of the contingency fund established under current budgetary procedures, the Secretary-General should provide a fuller explanation of why that fund should be reduced to 0.25 per cent of the overall level of resources.

18. Mr. GODA (Japan) said he was pleased that, despite additional mandates and unforeseen and extraordinary expenses, the level of revised appropriations reported by the Secretary-General (A/C.5/51/38) was lower than the amount of the

1996-1997 programme budget, even though the reduction was due primarily to changes in exchange rates. His delegation had taken note of the estimated requirements for the missions in Guatemala, El Salvador and Afghanistan, and requested the Secretariat to provide a comprehensive list of estimated additional requirements. He understood that the current trend in exchange rates might reduce actual requirements and that the financial implications of the recommendations of ICSC could not be ascertained until the Fifth Committee had completed its consideration of those recommendations. His delegation would determine its final position after the outstanding questions that had been raised had been addressed by the Secretary-General and considered by the General Assembly, as noted in paragraph 21 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/51/7/Add.6).

19. Mr. ATIYANTO (Indonesia) said that his delegation fully supported the statement made on the items by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The additional reduction in resources proposed for the biennium 1998-1999, particularly in the area of international and regional development cooperation, was a matter of deep concern to his delegation. All mandated programmes and activities in that area should receive sufficient resources for full implementation.

20. Since the proposed programme budget outline was only a preliminary estimate, delegations should continue to work together and study all available options. He questioned whether it was appropriate to adopt a zero or negative growth programme budget in view of the increasingly urgent need for the Organization to fulfil its unique role in world events.

21. Mr. NOUR (Egypt) also endorsed the statement made by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

22. Priority should be given to full implementation of programmes and activities approved by the General Assembly. Any new activities for the maintenance of international peace and security should be approved after the budget was adopted, and new appropriations should be possible without adversely affecting other activities.

23. It was regrettable that the performance report had not been submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 50/214, as Member States would be unable to judge the extent of implementation of approved programmes and activities. While his delegation welcomed the continuing efforts to increase efficiency and productivity, no convincing explanation had been provided in support of the saving of $204.7 million in the proposed programme budget outline. Further details should be provided as to how those savings would be achieved. His delegation supported the recommendations of the Advisory Committee concerning the contingency fund.

24. Ms. CHEN Yue (China) fully supported the statement made by the representative of Costa Rica on the subject of the performance report.

25. The most important objective of the budget was to ensure that sufficient resources were made available for mandated programmes and activities, the full implementation of which should not be adversely affected by economy measures. Any savings from sources such as exchange rate variations should be recovered in





the budget. Further explanations were needed regarding the proposed saving of $204.7 million, and allowances must be made for possible increased mandates and for unexpected or extraordinary expenses.

26. A proposal for a zero or negative increase for the biennium 1998-1999 at the current stage would be arbitrary and unrealistic, and a proposal to set the general level of the contingency fund simply on the basis of the experience of the previous biennium would be of doubtful reliability and validity.

27. Mr. MAIGA (Mali) expressed support for the statement made by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Priority must be given to the implementation of mandated programmes and activities.

28. While the form of the proposed programme budget outline complied with General Assembly resolution 41/213, its substance did not. Insufficient provision had been made for the financing of new mandates, which were of an unforeseeable nature, and the contingency fund should remain at 0.75 per cent rather than 0.25 per cent of the regular budget, particularly at a time of financial difficulties.

29. Ms. FIGUERA (Venezuela) supported the statement made by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The Secretary-General should submit general policy proposals before his proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999.

30. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) recalled that the purpose of the performance report, as stated in paragraph 1, was "to identify adjustments required owing to variations in the rates of inflation and exchange and in standards assumed in the calculation of the initial appropriations"; in other words, it was a technical exercise in recosting. The Secretary-General's proposed cost reductions of $154.1 million in response to General Assembly resolution 50/214, set out in document A/C.5/50/57/Add.1, remained valid. The Assembly had also requested the Secretary-General to produce a report on possible means of absorption of the cost of new mandates. As a result of recosting, savings had been achieved which would be sufficient for that purpose. However, the General Assembly had not instructed the Secretary-General to make use of any savings from recosting to offset any proposed cost reductions; to do so would require an additional decision by the Assembly.

31. Turning to the question of conference services, he recalled that the Secretariat had been asked to provide services for a number of meetings additional to those scheduled in the calendar of conferences. He recalled that, in document A/C.5/51/22, three sets of meetings had been identified for which conference services could not be provided without additional resources, while document A/C.5/51/22/Add.2 had stated that, should the Fifth Committee exercise the option to use the entire 15 weeks of meeting services reserved for its inter-sessional meetings in 1997, no resources would be available to service those three sets of meetings. On the other hand, should the Fifth Committee agree to meet for a maximum of eight weeks between its regular sessions, the residual provision for seven weeks could be allocated for the servicing of the three sets of meetings.

32. Replying to a question about the Secretary-General's decision to send a representative to Nigeria, he recalled that General Assembly resolution 50/199 had asked the Secretary-General to carry out a good offices mission in that country. If desired, the Secretariat would provide further details in an informal meeting.

33. In response to a question concerning additional requirements to be submitted to the Committee before the end of 1996, he said that the amount referred to by the Chairman at the previous meeting had been calculated on a net basis, whereas it should have been given on a gross basis. The programme budget implications of draft resolutions on United Nations peacekeeping missions that had yet to be considered were: for Afghanistan - $3,516,000; for Guatemala - $7,602,000; and for El Salvador - $476,000. It was understood that a further draft resolution would be forthcoming, concerning the civilian mission in Haiti; its programme budget implications would be calculated in due course.

34. As in previous years, the performance report had taken into account the recommendations of ICSC. Appropriate adjustments would be made once the Committee reached a decision on those recommendations. As for the programme budget outline for the biennium 1998-1999, he hoped that the General Assembly would again provide the Secretariat with the necessary guidelines, drawing on the outline, to enable it to prepare a programme budget. If a decision of the General Assembly was not forthcoming, the Secretariat would consider that it must in any case prepare a proposed programme budget, since under the established budgetary cycle the Secretary-General had a mandated duty to submit it early in 1997, and it would do so on the basis of the outline before the Committee.

35. Responding to questions from Committee members, he pointed out that the outline was intended to serve as a basis for deliberations and negotiations: the level and allocation of resources was a political decision to be taken by Member States, while the role of the Secretary-General was to facilitate consensus-building. In recent months, the Committee had reaffirmed General Assembly resolution 41/213, but it had also taken actions which were not in line with that resolution and which caused the Secretariat to experience considerable difficulties in responding to the financial implications of draft resolutions submitted by Member States. The purpose of the Secretary-General's proposal was to facilitate that situation; if Member States considered that it was a concept worth pursuing, the Secretariat would be glad to enter into discussions on that matter.

36. Determining the size of the contingency fund was a policy issue and a matter for judgment, rather than a scientific exercise. The decision in that regard lay with Member States.

37. The Secretary-General had identified six priority areas so as to elicit guidance from Member States regarding the allocation of resources.

38. Regarding the questions of immediate relevance identified by the Advisory Committee in its report (A/51/720), the rates of exchange and inflation used in the outline (para. 18(a)) were those in the initial appropriations for the biennium 1996-1997, which had been approved in December 1995. Outputs deferred, postponed or curtailed (para. 18(b)) would need to be taken into account by

programme managers in the context of the Secretary-General's ultimate proposals for the programme budget. No breakdown could be given of the amount of $204.7 million (para. 18(c)) until submissions had been received from programme managers, as the Advisory Committee had indicated.

39. It had been proposed to maintain a 6.4 per cent vacancy rate (para. 18(d)) for the biennium 1998-1999, when the amount would be larger than the approximately $50 million for the biennium 1996-1997. Two activities accounted for the $8 million referred to by the Advisory Committee (para. 18(e)): Habitat II, held in 1996, and the acquisition of equipment for the International Court of Justice. In accordance with the standard methodology, both had been eliminated from the outline.

40. Programme managers needed to take account of ongoing, deferred and newly approved activities for 1996-1997 as well as new activities for 1998-1999 in formulating their budget proposals (para. 18(f)). In the context of the proposed programme budget for 1998-1999, newly approved activities for the biennium 1996-1997 must have priority.

41. Mr. NOUR (Egypt) said that his delegation was not convinced by the explanations given by the Controller regarding the procedure followed in connection with the financing of peacekeeping activities approved after the adoption of the budget. The political positions of States should not concern the Secretariat as long as there was no specific political mandate, and the only relevant authorization was General Assembly resolution 41/213, which the Secretariat should implement strictly.

Request for subvention to the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (continued) (A/C.5/51/33)

42. Mr. STEIN (Germany), Vice Chairman, said that agreement had been reached in informal consultations to take note of the note by the Secretary-General and of the Advisory Committee's recommendations.

43. Mr. KELLER (United States of America) said that his delegation had hoped to wean the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research from its subventions, but had been persuaded that mid-biennium was not the appropriate time. Nevertheless, he would welcome some indication of that in the Committee's draft budget resolution.

44. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should recommend to the General Assembly that it should take note of the note by the Secretary-General (A/C.5/51/33) and the recommendations thereon of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions.

45. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.

# A/C.5/51/
# SR.44

Readex
Fiche

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FIFTY-FIRST SESSION

*Official Records*

FIFTH COMMITTEE
44th meeting
held on
Sunday, 15 December 1996
at 3 p.m.
New York

# SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 44th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. SENGWE (Zimbabwe)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 118: PATTERN OF CONFERENCES (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 116: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1996-1997 (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 124: FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS ANGOLA VERIFICATION MISSION (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 119: SCALE OF ASSESSMENTS FOR THE APPORTIONMENT OF THE EXPENSES OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of the publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-794, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

Distr. GENERAL
A/C.5/51/SR.44
28 February 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

96-82500 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 4.35 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 118: PATTERN OF CONFERENCES (continued)

1. Mr. ALOM (Bangladesh), speaking in his capacity as the coordinator of informal consultations on agenda item 118, said that a draft resolution had been agreed upon, subject to some minor drafting changes which had yet to be finalized. Moreover, one delegation had stipulated that the Secretariat should make an explanatory statement when the draft resolution was formally adopted.

2. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should inform the General Assembly that, should it adopt the relevant draft resolutions contained in the reports of the Sixth Committee on agenda items 144 (Convention on the law of the non-navigational uses of international watercourses), 147 (Establishment of an international criminal court), 150 (Report of the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization) and 151 (Measures to eliminate international terrorism), it was understood that the question of the additional meetings requested in connection with those resolutions had been dealt with by the Fifth Committee in the context of its draft resolution on agenda item 118 (Pattern of conferences).

3. It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 116: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1996-1997 (continued)

Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/51/L.57 concerning agenda item 40 (A/C.5/51/41)

4. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the adoption of draft resolution A/51/L.57 would renew the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA) until 31 March 1997. Based on the assumptions outlined in paragraph 3 of his statement (A/C.5/51/41), the Secretary-General had estimated that the requirements for that three-month extension of the Mission's mandate would amount to $7,102,400 net, which was roughly equivalent to the monthly rate of $2.3 million which the General Assembly had authorized in its resolution 50/216 for the period 1 April to 31 December. The difference of some $100,000 was due mainly to the effects of recent trends in exchange rates and inflation.

5. The draft resolution provided for only a three-month extension of the Mission's mandate because, although the United Nations would continue to operate in Guatemala after 31 March 1997, the nature and level of its presence were still uncertain. The Advisory Committee had been informed that, by 31 March 1997, the Secretary-General would submit recommendations on the restructuring and staffing of MINUGUA which would provide a clearer indication of the Mission's future requirements. The Secretary-General should have indicated in his statement the procedures he would follow if more resources were required after 31 March 1997.

6. Should the General Assembly adopt draft resolution A/51/L.57, an additional appropriation of $7,102,400 would be required for 1997 under section 3 of the programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997. An additional appropriation of $500,100 would also be required under section 32, Staff assessment, offset by the same amount under income section 1, Income from staff assessment. Those amounts were not covered by the contingency fund.

7. Ms. PEÑA (Mexico) said that she had been told, in informal consultations with representatives of the Secretariat, that the activities provided for in the draft resolutions referred to in the statements of programme budget implications being considered at the current meeting would not require additional contributions from Member States over and above the amount of the current budget. She asked the Secretariat to confirm that information.

8. Mr. KELLER (United States of America) recalled that, in resolution 50/216, the General Assembly had approved a monthly level of $2,329,700 for MINUGUA, or approximately $6,989,000 for three months. However, the Committee was currently being asked to approve an additional $113,000. Although the Chairman of the Advisory Committee had attributed that difference to variations in exchange rates and inflation, exchange rates had recently been favourable for the United States dollar and should have reduced the Mission's requirements instead of increasing them.

9. Mr. HO (Singapore) asked for confirmation that the statement of programme budget implications under consideration did not take into account the request for military observers submitted by the Government of Guatemala.

10. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) said that the Mission's increased requirement for 1997 was due to a 1.6 per cent increase in staff salaries. He confirmed that no action had yet been taken on the request submitted by the Guatemalan Government and that the estimates included only the cost of continuing civilian operations in Guatemala. With respect to the Mexican delegation's comment, he said that the Secretariat had not given, and could not give, any official assurances that no further contributions would be needed. In fact, paragraph 10 of the Secretary-General's statement (A/C.5/51/41) indicated that it was not anticipated that 1997 requirements in relation to MINUGUA could be absorbed from within the provisions under section 3 of the programme budget for 1996-1997. Moreover, paragraphs 6 and 7 of the first performance report (A/C.5/51/38) noted that additional requirements were anticipated as a result of the General Assembly's actions at its current session. Because of the actions taken thus far, the total amount of the budget had risen from the $2,602,693,800 mentioned in the first performance report to $2,614,700,000.

11. Ms. SHENWICK (United States of America) asked what financial ramifications would result if the Fifth Committee deferred its consideration of the recommendations of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC), particularly those concerning the proposed pay increase and the common staff assessment, until the resumed session in the spring of 1997.

12. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) said that he would need time in which to prepare an answer based on various assumptions, which would, in turn, depend on the outcome of the Fifth Committee's informal consultations.

13. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should inform the General Assembly that, should it adopt draft resolution A/51/L.57, additional requirements of $7,102,400 would arise under section 3 of the programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997. Additional requirements of $500,100 would also arise under section 32, Staff assessment, offset by the same amount under income section 1, Income from staff assessment. Those requirements would be considered in the context of the revised appropriations for the biennium 1996-1997.

14. It was so decided.

15. Mr. KELLER (United States of America) said that, like the Mexican delegation, his delegation had been given to understand that no additional contributions would be required for the missions under consideration.

Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/51/L.58 concerning agenda item 40 (A/C.5/51/42)

16. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that draft resolution A/51/L.58 provided for the closure of the United Nations Verification Office in El Salvador (ONUV) after 31 December 1996; for periodic visits to El Salvador by a special envoy of the Secretary-General; and for the establishment of a support unit in El Salvador, which would remain active for six months to assist the special envoy in key areas, with administrative support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The unit would include three Professional posts, one General Service post, one civilian police officer and seven local-level posts.

17. Should the General Assembly adopt draft resolution A/51/L.58, the requirements were estimated at $408,700 for the period from 1 January to 30 June 1997. The support unit's functions were expected to end by 30 June 1997. Active collaboration with other United Nations agencies would facilitate the latter's take-over of those functions at that time. In view of the Secretary-General's request for the appropriation of $886,000 net ($1,021,900 gross), which appeared in document A/C.5/51/42 and in the first performance report (A/C.5/51/38), the Advisory Committee recommended the additional appropriation of $408,700 for 1997, under section 3 of the programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997, and $68,200 under section 32, Staff assessment, offset by the same amount under income section 1, Income from staff assessment. Those amounts were not covered by the contingency fund.

18. Mr. KELLER (United States of America) asked why the staff travel provision, which had been rejected by the Advisory Committee the previous year, had been reinstated in the programme budget implications for the current year.

19. Ms. PEÑA (Mexico) said that she had the same understanding with respect to ONUSAL as she had expressed in reference to MINUGUA.

20. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) said that the travel of staff included in the cost estimates related to the regular visits to El Salvador from United Nations Headquarters by the high-level envoy of the Secretary-General, who, in order to reduce costs and the United Nations presence in the field, was now based in New York instead of El Salvador.

21. Mr. KELLER (United States of America) supported the comments made by the representative of Mexico with respect to the Secretariat's potential for absorption. The Controller's response was disingenuous, since the same number of trips would be taken by the Assistant Secretary-General in the following year as had been requested in the previous year.

22. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the previous year, the Advisory Committee had concluded that the amount requested for travel might be in excess of actual requirements. At that time, four visits had been envisaged. For 1997, three were proposed. The level of the budget itself was cause for greater concern. There was very little room to absorb that additional expenditure. While the number of trips had been reduced, the amount involved was slightly more than in 1996. The Advisory Committee had concluded that the funds for travel would be required for six months. Subsequently, support for the high-level envoy would be given by agencies in the operational area. The Advisory Committee would bear in mind the amounts for travel and the comments by the representative of the United States when it reviewed the Secretary-General's next statement on the matter.

23. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) said that the cost estimates for the previous six months had been more than 100 per cent higher than the estimates for the next six months. The Secretariat had made every effort to reduce costs such as staff travel, salaries and the number of staff, and hoped that such efforts were appreciated. However, if some Member States felt that the costs were still too high, the issue would be re-examined. Assurances given informally by some officials had to be confirmed officially and be reflected by the Secretary-General in his report.

24. Mrs. RODRÍGUEZ-ABASCAL (Cuba) said it was regrettable that two different views had been expressed with respect to the financial implications for Member States of draft resolutions A/51/L.57 and A/51/L.58. It was equally regrettable that the other staff had given views that were different from those of the Secretary-General, which reflected the Organization's official position.

25. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should inform the General Assembly that, should it adopt draft resolution A/51/L.58, additional requirements of $408,700 would arise for 1997 under section 3 of the programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997. Additional requirements of $68,200 would also arise under section 32, Staff assessment, offset by the same amount under income section 1, Income from staff assessment. Those requirements would be considered in the context of the revised appropriations for the biennium 1996-1997.

26. It was so decided.

Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/51/L.49 B concerning agenda item 39 (A/C.5/51/40)

27. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that, as indicated in the Secretary-General's report, the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMA) played the lead role in the United Nations efforts to help bring peace in Afghanistan. The

continuation and strengthening of the Special Mission, which had started in 1996 in response to General Assembly resolution 50/88 B, required a staffing component of 37 posts for 1997 - an increase of two posts when compared to 1996. That included the addition of 2 civilian police and of 3 additional military advisers, 7 professional posts, including a Head of Mission at the Assistant Secretary-General level instead of the Under-Secretary-General level, 4 Field Service posts, 2 General Service posts and 17 local level posts. The Advisory Committee recommended approval of that request.

28. The Advisory Committee had sought further clarification regarding the $752,000 requested for rental and maintenance of aircraft, and had been informed that the Special Mission had been using the aircraft operated by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance to Afghanistan (UNOCHA). The amount proposed was to cover the lease/charter of a separate aircraft after January 1997. However, the Committee had also been informed that the use of the UNOCHA aircraft would cost $100,000 less than such an arrangement. It believed that there was room for closer coordination between the Special Mission and the humanitarian operation carried out by the Department for Humanitarian Affairs in Afghanistan; and recommended that a full review should be carried out with a view to streamlining and bringing efficiency to both operations in order to reduce operational costs wherever possible.

29. The Committee also noted that requirements for furniture and equipment of $106,000 for 1996 had not been utilized and were rolled over into the total amount proposed for 1997 of $116,100. The Committee recommended that the Mission should explore the possibility of using existing stock from the United Nations before making new acquisitions.

30. As indicated in paragraph 11 of the Secretary-General's statement, total requirements for 1997 were estimated at $3,741,200. However, since expenditures for 1996 were estimated at $2,109,800, as compared with the approved amount of $2,617,400, the Secretary-General was proposing that the savings of $507,600 for 1997 should be applied. Paragraph 13 indicated that, should the General Assembly adopt draft resolution A/51/L.49 B, the resources required for 1997, under section 3 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997 would amount to $3,233,600.

31. In view of its comments regarding the rental of aircraft and the purchase of furniture and equipment, the Advisory Committee recommended an additional appropriation of $3,100,000 under section 3 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997. An additional appropriation of $282,600 would also be required under section 32, Staff assessment, offset by the same amount under Income section 1. Those amounts were not covered by the provisions of the contingency fund.

32. Ms. PEÑA (Mexico) said the understanding that her delegation had received from Secretariat officials regarding the other two missions also applied to the Mission to Afghanistan.

33. Mr. KELLER (United States of America) said that his delegation felt that it would be useful to indicate that the staff level of the five political affairs officers for the Special Mission should reflect the varying degrees of responsibility inherent in such positions and that the Special Mission should

not be staffed exclusively at the senior professional level. That would not conflict with the General Assembly resolution 50/88 B, which was designed to increase and reinforce the military adviser and police adviser contingents of the mission.

34. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) said that it should be borne in mind that in paragraph 2 of resolution 50/88 B, the General Assembly had expressed its support for the decision of the Secretary-General to strengthen the Special Mission by stationing four additional political counsellors in Afghanistan, and had urged the Secretary-General to initiate the necessary arrangements as soon as possible. The political counsellors were not all located in the same place; they were each stationed at a different outpost in Afghanistan.

35. The CHAIRMAN suggested that, on the basis of the Advisory Committee's recommendations, the Committee should decide to inform the General Assembly that should it adopt draft resolution A/51/L.49 B, additional requirements of $3,233,600 would arise under section 3 of the programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997. Additional requirements of $282,600 would also arise under section 32, Staff assessment, offset by the same amount under income section 1, Income from staff assessment. Those requirements would be considered in the context of the revised appropriations for the biennium 1996-1997.

36. It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 124: FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS ANGOLA VERIFICATION MISSION (continued)

Draft resolution A/C.5/51/L.20

37. Mrs. EMERSON (Portugal), introducing draft resolution A/C.5/51/L.20, said that in paragraph 7, the words "address the relevant findings and to" should be added after the words "take all necessary actions to". During informal consultations, concern had been expressed in connection with paragraph 28 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/51/700 and Corr.1). The General Assembly would trust that the salary paid by contractors to local workers would be competitive, fair and reasonable, so that the United Nations would not be perceived as condoning the exploitation of cheap labor.

38. Draft resolution A/C.5/51/L.20 was adopted.

39. Ms. RIECK (Germany) said that her delegation had joined in the consensus but was concerned that, since one Member State had announced its intention to reduce its assessed contribution to peacekeeping budgets to an amount which it deemed convenient, no peacekeeping budget would be fully covered by contributions of Member States. That unilateral action would further contribute to the already difficult cash-flow situation of the Organization and, in the long run, would jeopardize the implementation of all peacekeeping operations. Her delegation felt that the commitment authority of the Secretary-General for each peacekeeping budget should be adjusted to the predictable income level.

40. Germany fully supported UNAVEM; however, it could not accept either non-payment by other Member States or a change in its effective share in the current scale of assessments.

AGENDA ITEM 119: SCALE OF ASSESSMENTS FOR THE APPORTIONMENT OF THE EXPENSES OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued)

Draft resolution A/C.5/51/L.21

41. Ms. PEÑA (Mexico), introducing draft resolution A/C.5/51/L.21, said that her delegation had noted on a number of occasions that the scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations was at variance with the current financial situation of the United Nations and the reform of the Organization. The current financial situation derived primarily from the failure of certain Member States to make their financial contributions to the Organization on time and in full.

42. In draft resolution A/C.5/51/L.21 the Committee on Contributions would be requested to recommend to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session a scale of assessments for the period 1998-2000, on the basis of elements on which there appeared to be broad agreement.

The meeting rose at 6.35 p.m.